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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DeLAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
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AND RELATED AGENCIES

July 3, 2018

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen, Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Azar and Secretary Nielsen:

I remain deeply troubled by reports of chaotic attempts to reunify parents and children that were separated at the border as result of the Zero Tolerance policy. I write today to request information from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on the status of efforts to reunify these families.

Since the President's Executive Order was signed on June 20, 2018, the Administration has repeatedly indicated that families would be reunited, claiming that "Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have a process established to ensure that family members know the location of their children and have regular communication after separation to ensure that those adults who are subject to removal are reunited with their children for the purposes of removal."

The Administration claims that "the United States government knows the location of all children in its custody and is working to reunite them with their families," and that to do so, "[t]here is a central database which HHS and DHS can access and update" containing information on the location of separated parents and their children.¹

The hastily-signed order provided no clarity on how to reunify families, or how to handle families that have already been separated or new families that cross the border seeking asylum. Officials within the Office of Refugee Resettlement have been quoted eight days from the July 10, 2018 deadline for reunification that "it has been really difficult to start the reunification process because we just don't have a lot of direction

¹ Department of Homeland Security, "Fact Sheet: Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification," press release, June 23, 2018, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/06/23/fact-sheet-zero-tolerance-prosecution-and-family-reunification>.

from leadership.”² Furthermore, I am concerned that even as the Administration works to reunify families, it continues to deport adults and family members who had children taken from them, reducing their chances of reunification even further.³

Last week, HHS announced it had over two thousand children in its care who have been separated from their parents, and HHS and DHS are responsible for reuniting these families. However, just this week, HHS has refused to provide a detailed breakdown of how many minors were still in the care of HHS-funded facilities.⁴ It is unacceptable to provide a generalized number of unaccompanied children in HHS’s care, given that the children separated from their families were made unaccompanied by this Administration. The distinction matters significantly.

To help me better understand the current status of reunification efforts, as well as your agencies’ plans to improve and hasten reunification, I request that you provide me with the following information by July 6, 2018, with weekly updates and briefings on your progress until all families are reunited.

1. An anonymized, de-identified list of all children who were separated from a parent or adult family member pursuant to the Administration’s “Zero Tolerance” policy. For each child, please also provide the following information:
 - a. The total number of days the child has been separated from their parent or adult family member;
 - b. Whether or not ORR has identified the parent or adult family member from whom they were separated;
 - c. Whether or not ORR has successfully contacted the parent or adult family member from whom they were separated; and
 - d. Whether the child is currently under the care of ORR, has been deported, or has been released to a sponsor.
 - e. Whether or not DHS identified that the child arrived in the United States with a parent or adult family member upon initial processing by Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

² Politico, Ted Hesson and Dan Diamond, “As deadline looms, Trump officials struggle to reunite migrant families, July 2, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2018/07/02/as-deadline-looms-trump-officials-struggle-to-reunite-migrant-families-496902>.

³ Vox, “500 migrant kids have been reunited with their parents. More than 1,000 are still caught in the system,” Jen Kirby, June 23, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/6/23/17494084/trump-administration-separated-kids-reunification-process>

⁴ PBS NewsHour, Lisa Desjardins, “Read: HHS just stopped telling us how many kids have been separated,” July 2, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/read-hhs-just-stopped-telling-us-how-many-kids-have-been-separated>.

2. An anonymized, de-identified list of all parents and adult family members separated from their children pursuant to the Administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy, and their relation to the child. For each parent or adult family member, please also provide the following information:

- a. The total number of days the parent or adult family member has been separated from their children;
- b. Whether or not ORR has identified the child from whom they were separated;
- c. Whether or not ORR has successfully contacted the parent or adult family member to notify them of their child's location: and
- d. Whether the parent or adult family member is currently being detained, has been deported, or has been released.
- e. Whether or not DHS identified that the parent or adult family member arrived in the United States with a child upon initial processing by CBP.

3. An anonymized, de-identified list that connects the parents and adult family members listed in (2) with their children, as listed in (1); and

4. The number of families that have been deported while leaving their children behind.

5. The number of families that have been deported together with their children.

6. A detailed briefing for Members of Congress from DHS and HHS officials providing information on how the agencies are currently working to connect parents and adult family members listed in (2) with their children listed in (1), including the process available to parents outside of the United States to receive information regarding the whereabouts of their children, specifically through the ORR hotline.

7. A detailed plan outlining your agencies' further course of action should DHS and HHS fail to reunify all families by the July 10, 2018 deadline.

In order to protect the identity of migrants and their children, please do not share their names or any identifying personal information in your response. I urge DHS and HHS to work as swiftly as possible to reunite these families.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress